

Minutes of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council
JULY 13, 2011
TELECONFERENCE

NATURAL RESOURCES BUILDING
1111 WASHINGTON STREET SE
OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON
ROOM 431
JULY 13, 2011
10:00 A.M. – 11:15 A.M.

Voting members present (on phone): Al Black, Janelle Downs, Len Barson, Peter Dunwiddie, John Banks
Ex Officio members: Jeanne Koenings (Department of Ecology), Elizabeth Rodrick (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)-on phone,

Members absent: Bob Meier, Cherie Kearney, George Rohrbacher, Wade Troutman, Jed Herman (Washington Department of Natural Resources), Jim Eychaner (Recreation and Conservation Office), Rob Fimbel (State Parks and Recreation)

DNR Staff: John Gamon, Curt Pavola, Pene Speaks,

I. Introductions

Council Chair Black called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves, both those on the phone and in the meeting room. No guests were present.

**II. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes
Minutes of the January 27, 2011 meeting**

The minutes of the January 27, 2011 council meeting were presented for approval. (The draft minutes had been distributed to the council prior to the meeting.)

Chair Black determined that a quorum was present on the conference call. No changes were suggested to the draft minutes. A motion to approve the Minutes of the January 27, 2011 meeting of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council as presented was made by Len Barson, seconded by Janelle Downs. The motion passed unanimously. (Voting was accomplished by roll call with members on the teleconference stating their names and votes.)

**III. Old Business
Progress on Past Recommendations: Acquisitions Report –
written report**

Pavola reviewed the acquisitions update sent to the council prior to the meeting. (see NHAC Acquisition Update 07132011) There were eight parcels purchased at four natural areas: Davis

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Canyon NAP (1 parcel, 40 acres), Stavis NRCA (3 parcels, 19 acres), Trout Lake NAP (1 parcel, 68 acres) and Woodard Bay NRCA (3 parcels, 51 acres). He particularly mentioned that the parcel at Davis Canyon NAP, in Okanogan County, was donated by The Nature Conservancy. The Conservancy had owned the property since just after the site was established in 1986. Pavola also pointed out that the Wald acquisition at Woodard Bay NRCA is a Conservation Easement. Dunnwiddie inquired about any management fund endowment from TNC for the Davis Canyon parcel and suggested that DNR inquire about that option for any future transfers.

IV. New Business

Budget updates:

Natural Heritage Program funding status

Speaks presented information regarding the status of the Natural Heritage Program budget for the 11-13 biennium. The legislature was late in finalizing the state budget so the internal decision about how agency funding will be allotted has also been delayed. The initial budget numbers that were given to the program from DNR's budget office were insufficient to support the program. Speaks indicated that she has worked with her supervisor and DNR Executive Management to develop options for consideration for funding the program at existing staffing levels. However, no decisions have been made and no feedback has been forthcoming on what was submitted. At present most program staff are working on projects primarily funded by grants and contracts as usual. Speaks emphasized that if the program funding is not augmented beyond what was included in the initial budget numbers, the program will, for all intents and purposes, cease to exist.

Council members discussed a desire to communicate their concern about the program's budget situation to the Commissioner of Public Lands, Peter Goldmark. It was decided that chair Black would draft a letter regarding the topic and route it to all council members for feedback and edits. He will then send it to the Commissioner and appropriate Executive Management staff. He requested that Speaks supply email addresses for this purpose.

There was some further discussion regarding the loss of natural heritage programs in other states. Gamon indicated that the only one to his knowledge was Ohio's program which was defunded and the staff dispersed through the natural resource agency within which they were housed. The council also briefly discussed ideas about bridge loans or other alternative funding options. None seemed immediately promising.

Natural Areas Program funding status

Speaks presented information regarding the '11-'13 budget for the Natural Areas Program. The operating funding amount for the program is the same as for the previous biennium. No reduction was made to the program. The program also received a capital budget appropriation from the state legislature for \$1.5 million. This funding is very important to complete a number of projects on natural areas and will be critical to help fill gaps in operating funds to support program staff. The program also was awarded several restoration and development grants that will be used in a similar fashion to support staff and accomplish projects. Pavola described some of the capital and grant projects such as restoration and facilities work at Cypress Island NA, restoration at Camas Meadows NAP, trail development at Middle Fork Snoqualmie NRCA, restoration at Woodard Bay NRCA and others.

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grants

The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) was funded at \$42 million for the '11-'13 biennium for grants administered by the Recreation and Conservation Office. The DNR was awarded five grants for acquiring conservation lands and ten grants for environmental restoration and development of

recreation trails and facilities (a complete list of grants is at [http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/grants/WWRP\\$42Million.pdf](http://www.rco.wa.gov/documents/grants/WWRP$42Million.pdf)).

V. Agency Reports
Recreation and Conservation Office – No Report

Department of Ecology

Koenings shared information about Dabob Bay NA getting funding finalized from the federal Coastal and Estuarine Lands Conservation Program (CELCP) which provides grants through the Department of Ecology. The project was awarded close to \$3 million. She indicated that DOE submitted another three CELCP grant requests for this year: City of Normandy Park, Dabob Bay NA (phase 2), and Port Gamble Bay. She also submitted applications for seven National Coastal Wetland Conservation grants, a program that DOE also administers. The department has \$500,000 for the restoration of Puget Sound and has awarded 6 grants from those funds, some of which went to DNR. The money is intended for projects focused on Puget Sound.

State Parks and Recreation Commission - No Report

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Rodrick indicated what the funding levels were in WWRP for land acquisition and restoration and development grants for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The department received funding for three acquisition grants and two restoration grants. The Endangered Species Act Section 6 grant awards for land acquisition and restoration will be known soon. She shared that the department's wildlife and lands programs are not experiencing budget cuts for the biennium. However, Rodrick said the department's staff for processing their Hydraulic Project Approval permits are seeing a cut.

Department of Natural Resources

Speaks mentioned some of the other outcomes of the recent state legislative session for the department. She indicated that some other programs in the agency, such as the Forest Practices and Resource Protection Divisions, that are also dependent on state general funds have also experienced budget cuts. She also said that a bill that was passed last year and funded this year will result in department land that is in Pacific, Skamania and Wahkiakum Counties being transferred into Natural Resources Conservation Area status. The land is now managed by DNR for the counties for revenue but is "encumbered" by federal Endangered Species Act regulations. Because the timber on the lands cannot be harvested, county officials worked with the department and the legislature to allow the lands to be transferred into NRCA status in a similar fashion as the Trust Land Transfer program. The counties will receive compensation in the way of capital funding for the timber value (at non-encumbered rates) and the land value will be used to purchase more land better suited to revenue production. The funding will require the Natural Areas Program to develop NRCA boundaries for the lands in each of the counties prior to the lands being transferred. The legislature appropriated \$2 million for this biennium for the transfers.

VI. Other Business
October NHAC Meeting

There was some discussion about the October council meeting. Speaks indicated that the council may have some natural area boundary expansions to consider at that meeting. Due to the

uncertainty about the Natural Heritage Program it was decided to make decisions about the meeting format later in the year.

Adjourned at 11:15